

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20506

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June 27, 1969

National Security Decision Memorandum 18

TO: The Secretary of State
 The Secretary of Defense
 The Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission
 The Director of Central Intelligence
 The Director, Arms Control and Disarmament Agency
 The Director, Bureau of the Budget
 The Director, Office of Science and Technology

SUBJECT: Review of Underground Nuclear Tests

The President has directed that the NSC Under Secretaries' Committee will review the annual underground nuclear test program and quarterly requests for authorization of specific scheduled tests. The Committee will consider the policy and technical justifications for the proposed tests to determine if they are consistent with the requirements of national security and foreign policy.

When considering the subject of underground nuclear tests, the Under Secretaries' Committee will include, in addition to its regular membership, the Director of the Office of Science and Technology, the Director of the Bureau of the Budget, the Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, and the Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency.

The following guidelines will apply to the review and approval of nuclear tests that might violate or be regarded as violating the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. A nuclear test that is intended to be fully contained underground will be included in this category if there is a significant possibility that the test will place measurable amounts of radioactive debris beyond the boundaries of the United States under circumstances in which the debris could be credibly related to the test. Any other nuclear test which by its nature could reasonably give rise to domestic or foreign charges of a violation of the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty will be included in this category even though the sponsoring agency believes that the charges would prove to be unfounded. The guidelines are:

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Declassified/Released on 11/17/88
under pr. 12958
by F. Grosche, National Security Council
F&E-1000

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-- In planning the nuclear test program, the Atomic Energy Commission and Department of Defense will make every effort to avoid tests that might be regarded as being a violation of the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. It is recognized that this will be a matter of judgment since the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty does not contain precise technical criteria as to the nature of prohibited tests.

* -- If the Atomic Energy Commission or the Secretary of Defense believes after careful study that a particular test should remain in the program despite the possibility that it might give rise to a claimed violation of the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, the sponsoring agency will submit the test for review by the Under Secretaries' Committee.

-- In support of the proposals for each nuclear test of this type, the sponsoring agency will prepare for the reviewing committee a detailed study of the importance of the proposed test and the possible direct or indirect effects associated with the test that might be regarded as evidence of a violation of the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. The study of effects associated with the test will include an analysis of (a) the anticipated distribution of particulate and gaseous radioactive debris under the full range of possible meteorological conditions; (b) the extent to which blast, electromagnetic, and other direct radiation phenomena associated with the test will occur in the atmosphere; (c) the possibility that various foreign countries would be able to detect the anticipated level of radioactive debris and other phenomena associated with the tests with their detection instrumentation; (d) visible phenomena in the vicinity of the test site; and (e) planned or expected publicity.

The results of the Committee's review of the underground nuclear test programs and its recommendations should be transmitted to the President in time to allow him to give them full consideration before the scheduled events are to take place.

NSAM 269 and NSAM 307 are hereby rescinded.


cc: Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff

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